I am committed to share the excitement of learning with my students. I hope to convey to my students the importance of learning through shared meaning. As we explore topics together, I demonstrate that learning is dynamic and reflective; in other words, we can learn a lot from one another. Such learning I identify as "reciprocal learning." In my classroom I hope to emphasize the idea of reciprocal learning through shared meaning. I certainly wish that my students learn something from me. Additionally, I hope that my overall enthusiasm to pursue topics of psychology models to my students that one can never stop learning. Moreover, I consistently learn how to better improve my teaching from my students. I believe that this dynamic relationship of teaching and learning accomplishes shared meaning in the classroom.

I have established goals for my teaching that, when properly maintained, support my teaching philosophy: “reciprocal learning”

- 1.) Create a collaborative learning environment
- 2.) Engage students in the process of learning
- 3.) Encourage students to see themselves as teachers

**Goal 1: Create a Collaborative Learning Environment**

"Teaching is an achievement of shared meaning.” D. B Gowin

In order to create a collaborative learning environment, I strive to break barriers between teacher and learner that are typical in many academic environments (i.e., the standard lecture where absolute truths transcend from teacher to student). To promote a collaborative learning environment, I make it clear to my students that there are no absolute truths in learning (e.g., the book is always right or the teacher has all of the answers). Shared meaning in my classroom is not accomplished by students getting all of the answers correct on an exam; it is achieved by a dynamic process where students are encouraged to be critical consumers of information from course content, related outside readings, and their own experience.

I also hope to achieve a collaborative learning environment by making students feel connected to me as a teacher; that is, I make an effort to share appropriate aspects of my life and work and am available to my students outside the classroom. I work hard to be sure students have an “identity” in the class, marked by being called on by name and participating in class discussion. This type of rapport with students creates a comfortable learning environment. A collaborative learning environment is an important piece in achieving “reciprocal learning.”

**Goal 2: Engage Students in the Process of Learning**

"You can teach a student a lesson for a day; but if you can teach him to learn by creating curiosity, he will continue the learning process as long as he lives.” Clay P. Bedford

In order to engage students in my classroom, it is important that I explain to them that there is no one best method for teaching and learning. In order to excite students in the learning process, I use several methods (e.g., lecturing, discussion, demonstration, and active learning). Although not every teaching method can be inclusive of every learning style, I always challenge myself to understand the methods that
help my students learn best. Teaching adapted to multiple learning styles is likely to engage more students in the classroom. Students who are engaged are more likely to be “reciprocal learners.”

I ascribe to the learning paradigm described by Barr and Tagg (1995). They explain that, to produce “better” learners, it is necessary to excite students, elicit discovery of knowledge, and promote success. The only way students will become excited about learning is to get them involved in the process. In order to engage my students, I find ways to capture and hold their attention. Additionally, I consistently find ways to relate material to their lives. Linking students’ experiences with newly presented material should lead to meaningful connections of information and long-lasting learning. When students experience the class from a personal perspective, they become more willing to learn the material and use it outside of the classroom (e.g., teaching roommates, family, or friends about psychology). This extension of material shares meaning of psychology outside the confines of the classroom and promotes “reciprocal learning.”

Goal 3: Encourage Students to See Themselves as Teachers

“Teachers are responsible for learning to an extent, but students must bring something half way; learning is collaborative, cooperative, and supportive with equal effort and promise matching.”

Barr & Tagg (1995)

My students should be able to identify moments in class where they take on the role of teacher. Students who fulfill the goal of collaborative learning by the end of the class will be comfortable relying on their instructor, their peers, and themselves for knowledge. It is my goal to develop a quality two-way relationship with my students, one in which the learning experience is enhanced for both. As I continue to face challenges in the early stages of teaching, I will be just as much a student as I am the teacher.

References


Statement on Technology

Karla Lassonde

I believe it is important to creatively and effectively manage emerging technologies in the classroom and in research. In the classroom, I consistently use a variety of media (e.g., Power Point, video/DVD clips, active learning on the computer). I also use an online learning environment called Desire to Learn in all of my classes. This program allows me to communicate with my students via computer. I post assignments, conduct online quizzes, and send and receive email from this site. I also use a computer lab component in my Cognition class called “CogLab.” Students use a web database to complete lab simulations. I use data from student lab experiences to present overall results in class. Students enjoy actively participating in the labs and have a better overall understand of the lab topic.

In my program of research I use the experimental software program E-prime. E-prime provides the software and hardware for me to effectively run experiments in a cognitive psychology lab. The interface is user-friendly and provides a great opportunity to involve undergraduates in all aspects of research assessment and experimental design.

It is important to note that technology isn’t always the answer for effective teaching and research, but when used correctly can be an asset. I am hopeful to continue to integrate technology, when appropriate. My aim is to use my knowledge of human memory and cognitive processes to decide when technology is effective for teaching and learning.